

# Week 3: IMMIGRANTS IN THE BIBLE

## Introduction Question

Discuss this question at the beginning of this lesson.  
What immigrants can you think about in the Bible?

## Scripture

Read each of these excerpts from each biblical character and answer the questions.

### Joseph:

#### *Genesis 37:1-2*

<sup>1</sup> Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. <sup>2</sup> This is the story of the family of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

#### *Genesis 37:12-28*

<sup>12</sup> Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. <sup>13</sup> And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." <sup>14</sup> So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

He came to Shechem, <sup>15</sup> and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" <sup>16</sup> "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." <sup>17</sup> The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. <sup>18</sup> They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. <sup>19</sup> They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. <sup>20</sup> Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." <sup>21</sup> But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." <sup>22</sup> Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. <sup>23</sup> So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; <sup>24</sup> and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

<sup>25</sup> Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. <sup>26</sup> Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? <sup>27</sup> Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. <sup>28</sup> When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

#### *Genesis 39:1-6*

<sup>1</sup> Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. <sup>2</sup> The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. <sup>3</sup> His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. <sup>4</sup> So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him; he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. <sup>5</sup> From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the



Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. <sup>6</sup> So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate.

### *Genesis 41:40-45*

<sup>40</sup> You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only with regard to the throne will I be greater than you." <sup>41</sup> And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." <sup>42</sup> Removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph's hand; he arrayed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck. <sup>43</sup> He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command; and they cried out in front of him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. <sup>44</sup> Moreover Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." <sup>45</sup> Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenathpaneah; and he gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, as his wife. Thus Joseph gained authority over the land of Egypt.

## Discussion Questions

1. How did Joseph's own brothers and people treat Joseph?
2. How did Pharaoh and the Egyptians treat Joseph?
3. How did God treat Joseph?

## Ruth:

### *Ruth 1:6-18*

<sup>6</sup> Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them food. <sup>7</sup> So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. <sup>8</sup> But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. <sup>9</sup> The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. <sup>10</sup> They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." <sup>11</sup> But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? <sup>12</sup> Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, <sup>13</sup> would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me." <sup>14</sup> Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

<sup>15</sup> So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." <sup>16</sup> But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. <sup>17</sup> Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" <sup>18</sup> When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

### *Ruth 2:1-7*

<sup>1</sup> Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. <sup>2</sup> And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favor." She said to her, "Go, my daughter." <sup>3</sup> So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. <sup>4</sup> Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you." They answered, "The Lord bless you." <sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "To whom does this young woman belong?" <sup>6</sup> The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country



of Moab. <sup>7</sup> She said, 'Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment."

### *Ruth 4:13-22*

<sup>13</sup> So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son. <sup>14</sup> Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel! <sup>15</sup> He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." <sup>16</sup> Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. <sup>17</sup> The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

<sup>18</sup> Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron, <sup>19</sup> Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, <sup>20</sup> Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon, <sup>21</sup> Salmon of Boaz, Boaz of Obed, <sup>22</sup> Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of David.

### *Matthew 1:5*

<sup>5</sup> ...and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse...

## Discussion Questions

1. How did Naomi and the Israelites treat Ruth?
2. How did God treat Ruth?
3. What does the connection of Ruth 4:13-22 and Matthew 1:5 mean for the genealogy of Jesus?

## Abram/Abraham:

### *Genesis 12:1-3,10*

<sup>1</sup> Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

<sup>10</sup> Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land.

## Discussion Questions

1. How did God treat Abram?
2. What was the purpose of God blessing Abram and promising to make him a great nation? What should the purpose of this nation be?
3. What should the purpose of our nation be?

## Jesus, Mary, and Joseph:

### *Matthew 2:13-23*

<sup>13</sup> Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." <sup>14</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, <sup>15</sup> and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."



<sup>16</sup> When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. <sup>17</sup> Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

<sup>18</sup> “A voice was heard in Ramah,  
wailing and loud lamentation,  
Rachel weeping for her children;

she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

<sup>19</sup> When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, <sup>20</sup> “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” <sup>21</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. <sup>23</sup> There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazorean.”

### Discussion Questions

1. How did Jesus’ own people and government treat Jesus?
2. How did God treat Jesus?
3. Was this the first time Jesus or his ancestors were immigrants (hint: look back at the genealogy)?

### Cumulative Discussion Questions

1. How do these stories change your view on immigration?
2. Jesus comes from a long line of immigrants and is an immigrant himself, how does that change how we treat immigrants?
3. What are ways that we can treat immigrants better this week, this month, and this year?

### Prayer and the End of Week 3



## Resources

*The New Interpreter's Study Bible New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha.*  
Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003.

